858 mother's womb, and they compete for survival with other small
854 babies who live close by (one of the two is likely to die). They
754 are extremely susceptible to the mal de ojo (evil eye)[1] because their souls are tender, and they are, for the same reason, easy victims of witchcraft exercised against their parents. During the first few months of life, they are protected and cared for with innumerable precautions: they are covered up when strangers enter the house, attended at the slightest sign of distress, and
[513] rarely taken out of the sitio. Until another child is born, they sleep with the parents on the same petate (mat) or bed.

855 When a mother is ready to have a new baby, the younger
86'- one is given to an elder sister or grandmother with whom it can sleep. The baby is also weaned at this time. The separation of the child from the mother is an open traumatic experience, and parents admit that children get sick and even die as a result of "jealousy." Nevertheless, no direct attempt is made to smooth the emotional disturbances or the developing sibling rivalry in

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[826] [843] [841] [1]The evil eye has been described innumerable times for Middle America. In the Chiapas Highlands it is a sickness caused by a person with strong or "hot" eyes, who looks at the victim. Evil eye "carriers" are not necessarily aware of their power, but some individuals are consciously included in this category: pregnant women, menstruating women, and people with glasses or light eyes, or with very deep set eyes. To avoid giving "mal de ojo," the producer has to touch the person who can be a victim. If a menstruating woman distractedly looks at a small baby, she will immediately put her hand on the baby's forehead, to retrieve from him her power, and not make him sick.

The same procedure of touching the person is done if the other person feels that he is unwillingly "envying" the first one, and can be an unconscious witchcraft mediator. For example, if a married woman without babies sees another woman's baby, she will touch him to show that she is not "envying" the mother, and therefore, there is no danger that she will "steal" the baby's soul or make him sick with her envy.